

Inside The Army
March 5, 2001
Pg. 1

Army Relocates Some Contractors Beyond Pentagon Walls

The Army staff last week directed about 30 contractors to move out of the Pentagon as part of an ongoing review of its relationship with contractor support.

While some sources said the loss of the Pentagon office space was needed to offset a shortage of desks, others indicated the change was more about controlling the flow of information in and, most importantly, out of the building.

Contractors at Army headquarters are not always beholden to the directorate in which they find their seats. Often, a program manager or the program executive office pays a contractor's salary and supplies that person as a specialist to work his system's issues. The headquarters directorates, which are nearly always strapped for personnel, usually accept the PM- or PEO-provided bodies happily.

However, the Army staff has found it difficult to control such contractors' actions; where their loyalties lie -- with the PM or with the Army staff they support -- has been questioned. Recently, a contractor leaked "very sensitive information" regarding internal headquarters deliberations to the program manager, a source said. That PM then "started a campaign" to counter proposals under consideration at the staff level, he said.

Having contractors sponsored by a PM, PEO or someone else "doesn't allow us in the Army staff to look at options without getting everyone involved," the source said. The service cannot have a good intellectual discussion if outsiders get a peak, particularly when it leads to congressional inquiries, he asserted.

For now, the change is affecting contractors working within the force development directorate under the deputy chief of staff for programs. About one-third of FD contractors were told their "co-located services" were no longer needed. They remain under contract to the Army and will continue to work with their assigned offices -- just not in them, a source said.

Most of those moved out of the Pentagon have already found new homes in Crystal City, VA.

DCSPRO and the overall Army staff are examining the general role of contractors in the building. According to a source, the Army staff had already decided, prior to the most recent incident, to discard altogether the use of contractors provided by outside organizations. Any support needed in the future will be paid for directly by the Army staff and therefore no conflicts of interest should arise, he said.

For existing contracts that require the Army to provide office space, the service will likely move those personnel to military locations outside the Pentagon. The Defense Department has leased extensive amounts of space in northern Virginia and some of it may be used to address this need, a source said.

Other changes may be in store as the headquarters review of contractor support progresses. The Army is looking at every position to see which are needed, which can be eliminated and whether the services being provided are appropriately focused.

— Erin Q. Winograd